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ABSTRACT

Consideration of school facilities for physically handicapped, emotionally disturbed, and mentally retarded children includes a brief discussion of special education and some introductory comments on each condition. Suggestions are given for the design and construction of appropriate school facilities. (FS)

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SUGGESTED FACILITIES

FOR

SPECIAL CLASS PROGRAMS

EF 000927

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FOREWORD

This brochure has been prepared by a Committee of State and Local Educators, School Administrators, and the School Building Assistance Commission to assist School Building Committees in the planning for special classes.

April, 1965

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A POINT OF VIEW

Special classes are necessary for some exceptional children. Good special education programs emphasize the abilities of the child and de-emphasize his exceptionalities. His experiences are of an academic, physical, and social nature.

The need for flexibility in planning and maintaining a special education program becomes evident. Some elementary and secondary special classes are carried on in self-contained classrooms. In other cases, where they are able, exceptional children participate in some subjects outside the self-contained special classroom. The special class may also be a supportive, remedial, or therapeutic situation.

Translating the specific needs of modern special education programs into physical facilities becomes the responsibility of school building committees. To assist building committees in the difficult task of providing suitable facilities and equipment for the various special education programs, suggestions for planning are offered in the following sections of this report.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Research indicates that two to six percent of any school population will require special educational services. Mental Retardation alone affects 20 out of every 1,000 persons to some degree. Deviants from the normal once were abandoned, institutionalized, or ignored. Through more refined clinical procedures they are now identified and provided with special educational and rehabilitative opportunities. The most dramatic advance has been made during the past quarter of a century, in which special education programs in the United States have become five times more numerous than in the past.

The most significant factor affecting the rise and improvement of Special Education has been the public school. Guided as it is by state and federal legislation public education has become the major vehicle through which society as a whole has chosen to assume responsibility for the care of all its members. This concept of responsibility is now a basic idea in public education.

Massachusetts has long been recognized for its practical commitment to all phases of Special Education. In the General Laws Relating to Education, Chapter 69 is devoted in part to the organizing and governing of programs for the blind, partially sighted, deaf, hard of hearing and speech handicapped persons. Chapter 71 is devoted in part to the organization, direction and supervision of programs in special education for emotionally disturbed, physically handicapped, and mentally retarded.

EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED CHILDREN

Recent legislation has made it possible for public schools to provide special classes for some emotionally disturbed children. The community identifies cases and arranges medical and psychiatric evaluation. Educational recommendations are then made by an approved psychiatrist and the superintendent of schools, with final approval of the State Department of Education.

According to regulations written pursuant to General Laws Chapter 71, Section 46H, special classes for emotionally disturbed children shall not exceed enrollment of 8 children. The classes are for children who cannot adjust to any regular classroom situation and may include children of all intellectual levels. For the most part these classes are conducted at the elementary school level. As the need arises provision must be made for the emotionally disturbed at the nursery as well as junior and senior high school levels. When emotionally disturbed pupils are removed from the regular classroom and placed in this therapeutic educational milieu, most of the children arrive at a point of adjustment where successful return to regular public school classes is possible.

Public school provision for education in this area of exceptionality is comparatively new. Differences in facilities may be seen throughout the country according to the dictates of the philosophies employed.

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR FACILITIES FOR EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED CHILDREN

.... Locate on ground floor near a service drive for transported pupils.

.... Locate reasonably close to indoor physical educational facilities.

.... Provide a two way intercom system.

.... Provide direct access to outdoor play areas.

.... Make provision for a classroom-corridor sound and vision control.

.... Provide individual toilets for each sex near the classroom.

.... Provide drinking fountain in the classroom.

.... Provide coat storage for pupils in individual corridor lockers outside the classroom.

.... Design classroom with a study area and a work area.

.... Equip study area with movable pupil desks and chairs, reading table, bookshelves, bulletin board, chalkboard and pegboard.

.... Equip work area with work sink in counter, work counters (with storage under) or worktables with durable tops for paint and wet clay activities, work benches for craft work, kitchen range with oven, refrigerator, and pupil chairs.

.... Equip study and work areas with electrical outlets.

.... Provide storage units with locks for reading materials.

.... Consider special storage needs including: Small compartments for storage of unfinished pupil projects. Storage of audio-visual equipment such as T.V., filmstrip projector, slide projector, motion picture projector, opaque projector, overhead projector, record player, tape recorder, tachistoscope and teaching machines. Storage of typewriters and stands. Storage of carts, storage of arts-craft tools and materials.

.... Work cubicles in the classroom (designed or created by movable space divider) of different sizes have been used for various types of individual and small group instruction in some school systems.

.... Provide conference type rooms nearby for work with individual pupils.

MENTALLY RETARDED CHILDREN

The mentally retarded children in public schools are those whose intellectual limitations prevent them from functioning adequately within a regular class program. This classification includes distinct groups provided for by Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 71, Section 46.

> "Educable mentally retarded children and trainable mentally retarded children shall be enrolled in separate classes, except in those cases approved by the Department of Education."

THE EDUCABLE

> "Children who receive a score of from .50 to .79 on an intelligence test approved by the Departments of Mental Health and Education, and administered by an examiner approved by said departments; and in exceptional cases other children whom in the opinion of the superintendent of schools, and subject to the approval of the Department of Education, may be best served by this classification."

It is recommended that classes for the educable, mentally retarded be located in elementary, junior and senior high schools. The majority of educable, mentally retarded pupils will as adults be called upon to meet the demands of society. Their social adjustment and development require continual association with pupils in regular classes. A program of guidance, placement and follow-up should be indispensable in the instruction and training of mentally retarded children.

THE TRAINABLE

Trainable, mentally retarded pupils are more severely handicapped than the educable. For the most part trainable children carry on their school activities in a specialized self-contained classroom equipped to train them to care for themselves in everyday situations to the limit of their individual potentialities.

MULTIPLY HANDICAPPED

Mentally retarded children may have physical handicaps. Educational facilities for mental retardates and physically handicapped children of average intelligence have many features in common. Building committees may select from the suggested list of facilities the items appropriate to their needs.

PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED CHILDREN

Special classes for the physically handicapped in public schools are for those whose existing physical condition makes attendance in regular class not feasible. Placement in such classes is made on the joint recommendation of the attending physician and the school authorities with the approval of the State Department of Education. These children must be of at least average intellectual ability and physically able to profit from a program planned to meet their limitations and capabilities.

The size of the class is determined by the types and severity of the physical handicaps and the need for individualized instruction. The course of study for the physically handicapped classes adheres as closely as possible to the program of the local school systems. Opportunities are provided for each individual to adjust to, and to engage in extra-curricular activities within the full range of his potential. The goal is the eventual placement in a regular classroom.

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR FACILITIES FOR THE MENTALLY RETARDED
AND/OR PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED CHILDREN

> There may be children with multiple handicaps in any special class or regular class. Provisions will be necessary for children in wheelchairs, those with braces or crutches, as well as those finding it difficult to walk.

.... Locate in the general classroom area.

.... Locate on the ground floor near a driveway to facilitate entrance of handicapped pupils who are transported.

.... Provide a non-skid ramp at entrance with handrails and an overhead shelter.

.... Provide direct access to outdoor play area.

.... Construct corridors with non-skid floor surface and smooth wall surface sufficiently wide to prevent bumping of wheelchairs.

.... Provide elevators or ramps in multi-story buildings for pupils in wheelchairs or on crutches.

.... Provide doors easily opened and wide enough for use by pupils in wheelchairs and those using crutches. Cover lower half of door with metal to prevent wear. Eliminate thresholds.

.... Provide space in the auditorium for pupils in wheelchairs.

.... Make toilet facilities easily accessible from the classroom. Equip with vertical hand rails.

.... Attend to unusual acoustical problems, e.g., excessive noise from construction activities.

.... Provide a two way intercom system.

.... Provide a drinking fountain in the classroom.

.... Attend to special furniture needs, such as chairs with arms for leverage.

.... Provide one-way vision glass in corridor door.

.... Design classroom with a study area and a work area.

.... Equip study area with movable pupil desks and chairs, reading table, bookshelves, bulletin board, chalkboard and pegboard.

.... Equip work area with work sink in counter, work counters (with storage under) or worktables with durable tops for paint and wet clay

activities, work benches for craft work, kitchen range with oven, refrigerator, and pupil chairs.

.... Equip study and work areas with electrical outlets.

.... Consider special storage needs including: Small compartments for storage of unfinished pupil projects. Storage of audio-visual equipment such as T.V., filmstrip projector, slide projector, motion picture projector, opaque projector, overhead projector, record player, tape recorder, tachistoscope and teaching machines. Storage of typewriters and stands. Storage of carts, storage of arts-craft tools and materials.

.... Provide storage space and equipment for homemaking and industrial arts activities for secondary school pupils who must remain in a self-contained classroom.

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Additional copies may be obtained from the Committee Chairmen listed above.

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